

A Response to the Inquiry into Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament

Parliament of Australia
Joint Committee
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Submitted by:

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The scope of this submission

This submission addresses the fundamental character of nuclear weapons as the basis for any consideration of treaties concerning non-proliferation and disarmament. While such an approach may seem superfluous, given the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons, there are a variety of views concerning the continuing existence of these weapons

A so-called *realist* view will argue that the weapons exist and it is necessary to learn to live with them. That approach will accept the need for a 'nuclear balance' between those who hold such weapons.

The view of this submission is that realism in this matter requires a full appreciation of the character of nuclear armaments, leading to an urgent commitment to their abolition.

The fundamental character of nuclear weapons

Nuclear weapons represent a new level of destructive capacity which threatens life itself. The development and use of the weapons in Japan in 1945, and the further development and testing of nuclear armaments have demonstrated that destructive capacity.

These weapons are fundamentally destructive.

There are various avenues for assessing these weapons. I will present the following approaches

- *theological*
- *human rights*
- *ecological*

Theological

The theological approach here comes from a specifically Christian understanding of the world. It is understood that the Australian community is pluralist, consisting of many spiritual traditions. In this case, therefore, the argument is explicitly from a particular tradition. It is to be hoped that this will not disqualify it as a reasonable approach.

The Christian *theological* view understands human beings to be given a position of great dignity on this planet, which is accompanied by responsibility for caring for and preserving the planet. That is the gift of the Creator. Such is the destructive character of nuclear weapons their development may be understood as a human act of rebellion against the Creator. The development of the weapons, their use and threatened use, threatens to undo the structure of created life itself. Theologically, or *ontologically*, the existence of these weapons is anti-life. Not only is human life threatened with extinction, life on the planet is placed under a nuclear cloud. Human responsibility for care and preservation of the planet is therefore extinguished. The weapons which threaten such *annihilation* therefore threaten to return all created life on the planet to the *nihil* (*nothingness*).

The view may further be developed that the continuing threat of these weapons leads to a *spiritual malaise*, adversely affecting the human spirit at depth. Humanity is diminished by the use of the best minds and the world's resources in the production of weapons of annihilation.

Many church statements have been issued since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki declaring nuclear weapons, and the resulting arms race, as sinful, evil and against the will of God. Australian churches have also joined with international bodies, such as the World Council of Churches (See Attachment 1), and various Popes, the latest being Pope Benedict XVI (See Attachment 2), to declare against these weapons. (See Attachment 3) Fundamental statements were made by Dutch and German churches in the 1950s, as also by Australian churches. In the 1980s the objection to nuclear weapons were restated and strengthened. Such statements may be provided as required.

The fundamental theological judgement brings us to the two main traditions in church practice of war: *pacifism* and *just war*. A *pacifist approach* is against violence and war in principle, and therefore opposes nuclear weapons. The *Just war tradition* poses a number of tests for the just conduct of war. While this is increasingly under scrutiny, the tests for the conduct of a just war show that the use of nuclear weapons cannot be sustained. (See ATTACHMENT 4)

The two tests which follow show that nuclear warfare is not permissible.:

- The violence used in the war must be proportional to the injury suffered. States are prohibited from using force not necessary to attain the limited objective of addressing the injury suffered.
- The weapons used in war must discriminate between combatants and non-combatants. Civilians are never permissible targets of war, and every effort must

be taken to avoid killing civilians. The deaths of civilians are justified only if they are unavoidable victims of a deliberate attack on a military target.

A theological view also understands that nuclear weapons are not to be viewed in isolation from the process of production, with the risks and costs of radiation, and the economic cost of producing and maintaining these weapons. The human agony that has been produced here can have no justification.

The costs to civic life and statecraft must also be considered here, as the secrecy, deception and fear associated with this complex of production and threatened use, have a profoundly distorting effect.

A *theological view* which takes these weapons with such seriousness, holds that they must be abolished. Abolition will therefore be the fundamental assumption in all work on treaties. Maintaining a 'balance of terror' or some other strategy for retaining these weapons is therefore not to be justified, given their fundamentally destructive character.

The following two categories have theological roots. They also stand somewhat undependably of those origins.

1. *human rights*

The United Nations Charter of human rights seeks to provide for the quality and dignity of human life. Nuclear weapons, radiation and terror cannot be said to belong to such aspirations. The production of these nuclear weapons – and the possession and threatened use – are in fundamental opposition to those declarations which also seek to protect children. Therefore the test of *human rights* will seek the complete abolition of those weapons to destroy humanity utterly.

2. *ecological*

Human considerations are not to be carried out in isolation from the whole natural environment and the existence of other species. Humanity exists in a complex co-existence with other life. Human actions which employ such means of destruction, irradiating the planet, cannot be accepted. The threat to the future of the planet is not merely a human question; it bears on all life.

Conclusion

This submission argues that the fundamental character of nuclear weapons, in all phases of production and potential use, is destructive in the extreme. They are a violation of the human responsibility for preserving and caring for life on this planet.

I submit that any process of inquiring into the process of treaties for non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament must take as a first principle

the unacceptability of these weapons. The underlying assumption with be, therefore, the necessity of seeking urgent and universal abolition of all nuclear weapons.

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ATTACHMENT 1

Message from World Council of Churches on the 60th Anniversary of the Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The World Council of Churches and its member churches remember in thought and prayer all who perished and all who have suffered the consequences of the first atomic bombs or subsequent tests.

While most anniversaries lose importance over time, the sixtieth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki only becomes more important with every passing year. The reason is that the unfinished business of banning nuclear weapons has been derailed and urgently needs to be put back on track.

The bombings in 1945 were judged at the time as the ultimate indictment of the abuse of force. Yet 60 years later weapons a thousand times more fearsome are still with us and now nine states—not one—possess nuclear arms. Also today, proven remedies against the use of nuclear weapons are being eroded. Arms control treaties remain stillborn or are in neglect. The leadership required to sponsor and enforce them is absent.

On anniversaries, history is the best teacher. The World Council of Churches has listened closely to nuclear history and shared its lessons with governments around the world.

In 1955, the WCC called for the complete elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons verified by effective inspections. In 1965, the WCC applauded the partial Test Ban Treaty, but urged that it be extended and that money spent on nuclear weapons be used to assist developing countries. In 1975, the WCC warned that deploying tactical nuclear weapons had lowered the nuclear threshold, noted that important states had not yet signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and affirmed the treaty demilitarising space. In 1985, the WCC called governments—especially those with a unilateralist record—to make good-faith use of United Nations disarmament mechanisms, including the UN Conference on Disarmament. In 1995, the WCC urged adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

Today, critical progress in each of these areas is still pending and dangerously overdue. Despite nuclear crises in Iran and North Korea, other eminently feasible measures are languishing as well—including a treaty to control the nuclear fuel cycle, a protocol to stiffen the inspection powers of the International Atomic Energy Authority, plans to pull back nuclear weapons to ‘home’ territory, and pledges never to use nuclear weapons first starting with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The WCC policy is that all states together bear responsibility for the success of nuclear arms control. Governments that have said the world is more secure without nuclear weapons must bridge the gap between intransigent nuclear weapons states that have pledged to disarm on the one hand, and those reconsidering the option to seek nuclear weapons on the other.

Instead, at a month-long review conference of the all-important NPT this May, the WCC saw cracks widen in each of the treaty’s three pillars—in disarmament, nonproliferation

and peaceful uses of nuclear technology. Many eyes turned from these signs of disrepair in the international community to the world’s leading nations, the original nuclear powers.

Shortly after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the World Council of Churches declared that although law may require the sanction of force, the overwhelming force of modern warfare threatens the basis for law itself. Last month Hiroshima’s Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba wrote the US President about the essential alternative to using force: “The indispensable key to preventing nuclear proliferation is an international community co-operating and monitoring the situation together, not one forcibly governed by the rule of might”.

Mayors, parliamentarians and peace groups in more than 100 countries—and WCC

member churches in Japan and around the world—are committed to refocusing world leaders on achieving a nuclear-weapons-free world.

On anniversaries and every day, the imperative of Hiroshima and Nagasaki allows for no alternative.

WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs

Acting Director Clement John

August 3, 2005

Attachment 2

Pope Benedict XVI Statement on Nuclear Weapons

Updated: 1/22/2007

Posted: 12/15/2005

This excerpt is from [a longer message by Pope Benedict XVI](#) prepared for the World Day of Peace, to be celebrated on January 1, 2006.

"What can be said, too, about those governments which count on nuclear arms as a means of ensuring the security of their countries? Along with countless persons of good will, one can state that this point of view is not only baneful but also completely fallacious. In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims. The truth of peace requires that all - whether those governments which openly or secretly possess nuclear arms, or those planning to acquire them - agree to change their course by clear and firm decisions, and strive for a progressive and concerted nuclear disarmament. The resources which would be saved could then be employed in projects of development capable of benefiting all their people, especially the poor.

In this regard, one can only note with dismay the evidence of a continuing growth in military expenditure and the flourishing arms trade, while the political and juridic process established by the international community for promoting disarmament is bogged down in general indifference. How can there ever be a future of peace when investments are still made in the production of arms and in research aimed at developing new ones? It can only be hoped that the international community will find the wisdom and courage to take up once more, jointly and with renewed conviction, the process of disarmament, and thus concretely ensure the right to peace enjoyed by every individual and every people. By their commitment to safeguarding the good of peace, the various agencies of the international community will regain the authority needed to make their initiatives credible and effective."

Pope calls for halt of nuclear weapons

July 29, 2007 - 11:49PM

Pope Benedict XVI has called for a halt to the spread of nuclear weapons.

Pope Benedict said the International Atomic Energy Agency was set up 50 years ago to promote the peaceful use of nuclear science.

"The epochal changes of the past 50 years show how in the difficult crossroads that humanity finds itself (that) the pledge to encourage the non-proliferation of nuclear arms is always more real and urgent," Pope Benedict told a crowd gathered at his summer residence outside Rome.

"To promote a progressive and agreed nuclear disarmament and to favour the peaceful and assured use of nuclear technology for real development, respectful of the environment and always mindful of the most disadvantaged populations."

Issue Date: November 9, 2007



-- Zuma Press

A child victim of the Chernobyl disaster receives medical treatment in an oncology center in Belarus in 1995.

The pope, the bomb and nuclear power

By LINDA GUNTER

Pope Benedict XVI recently urged the abandonment of nuclear weapons, citing the genuine proliferation concerns this lethal and immoral technology represents. But during his July public address at Castel Gandolfo, the pontiff expressed a widely held but erroneous assumption: that the spread of civilian nuclear technology can help to alleviate poverty and even contribute to “peace, health and prosperity throughout the world.”

The pontiff’s remarks were influenced by his ongoing endorsement of the International Atomic Energy Agency, an organization that clings to the disingenuous view that a country offered nuclear power technology will happily split the atom to make electricity while promising not to develop nuclear weapons. However, because the technology required for “peaceful” nuclear power is a short step away from that needed to make nuclear weapons, surrender to that temptation is the most likely outcome.

This probability has been made crystal clear by the international anxiety over Iran’s uranium enrichment program. Iran insists it is for “peaceful” energy purposes. But no one can be sure. Enriching that same uranium to 20 percent instead of 5 percent gives Iran nuclear bomb-making capability. This is the conundrum of the inextricable link between nuclear power and nuclear weapons.

There is precedent for the concern over Iran’s intentions. India has the bomb thanks to commercial reactor technology from Canada and engineering expertise supplied by the United States. This not-so-peaceful use of the atom has led to a dangerously volatile situation between India and neighboring Pakistan, a country that also possesses nuclear weapons.

At least seven Middle Eastern countries are interested in acquiring a nuclear power program, once again leading to speculation that weapons production may be on their hidden agenda. Spreading commercial technology around the world also increases the odds of diversion or theft of nuclear material, even small amounts of which could be used for a deadly “dirty bomb.”

Every civilian nuclear reactor produces enough plutonium each year to make at least 40 atomic bombs. The radioactive waste generated by each reactor is so dangerous for so long -- tens of thousands of years or more for some isotopes -- that no acceptable storage or management solution has been found. Radioactive waste continues to languish at the reactor sites or in some cases is transported across the globe to be reprocessed. This dirty and contaminating chemical separation process produces yet more waste, much of which is discharged into the seas.

Radioactive waste discharge from reprocessing at the United Kingdom plant at Sellafield has rendered the Irish Sea the most radiologically contaminated body of water in the world. Seafood fished from the Irish and some Scandinavian coastlines is too deadly to eat. High rates of childhood leukemia around the Sellafield plant have been attributed to the exposures caused by reprocessing. Cancer clusters have also been recorded in communities close to the La Hague reprocessing plant on the northern coast of France where beaches have been closed due to radiological hazards.

Daily operation of nuclear power plants results in routine releases of radioactivity. The National Academy of Sciences has declared there is no safe dose of exposure to radiation. However, U.S. federal agencies have established “acceptable” levels of exposure based on what would be allegedly tolerable for a robust young male adult. One does not need to be a scientist to realize that the same dose inflicted on a pregnant woman and her unborn child would do far greater damage. Yet these standards have never been changed to reflect the greater vulnerability of women, children and the elderly.

The 1986 accident at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor remains the most tragic example of the health impacts of nuclear power and a grim illustration of the technology’s vulnerability to catastrophic accident. The Chernobyl disaster produced fallout with “400 times more radioactivity than was released at Hiroshima, drove a third of a million people from their homes and triggered an epidemic of thyroid cancer,” reported *National Geographic* in August 2006. Birth defects continue to occur among children born since the accident, victims of their parents’ exposure.

Nuclear power is no panacea for poverty either. The industry has been heavily subsidized by taxpayers since its inception and the price tag for just one new reactor has reached a staggering \$4-10 billion. Solar and wind power and other renewable energies, combined with energy efficiency and conservation measures, could provide more electricity at less cost, especially in poorer countries lacking the expensive infrastructure required to support a nuclear power program.

Pope Benedict’s devotion to the sanctity of life surely demands that he take the lead in calling for the total abolition not only of nuclear weapons but of the futile and frightening offspring it has spawned. There can be no more moral stand than rejecting forever the continued use of an energy source that has the capacity to cause death, disease and destruction to so many human beings.

Linda Gunter directs the media and development work for Beyond Nuclear. Operating under the auspices of the Nuclear Policy Research Institute, the organization aims to educate the public

about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons.

Related Web site

Beyond Nuclear

www.beyondnuclear.org

National Catholic Reporter, November 9, 2007

ATTACHMENT 3

Uniting Church welcomes action for nuclear
disarmament



Tuesday, 10 June 2008 00:00

The Uniting Church in Australia has today commended the Federal Government for its latest efforts towards banning nuclear weapons.

The commendation comes in the wake of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's announcement of the formation of the new Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Commission.

National Director of UnitingJustice Australia, Rev. Elenie Poulos, said the Uniting Church had long been committed to the elimination of all nuclear weapons, most recently lending its voice to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

"The Uniting Church has been consistent in its calls on successive Australian Governments to take a strong stand on nuclear disarmament and to advocate for the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons," Rev. Poulos said.

"We have been particularly concerned by the most recent threats to the integrity of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Many countries, including the US and Russia, both signatories to the Treaty, are continuing to invest in the development of nuclear weapons technology, and more than 5000 nuclear weapons around the world remain on high-alert.

"The establishment of a new international commission will hopefully reinvigorate the commitment to nuclear disarmament through renewed support for the NPT and the proposed Nuclear Weapons Convention."

Rev. Poulos said that the Commission should also focus its work on gaining a commitment from all nuclear weapons states to immediately lower the operational status of their weapons and commit to a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing, as well as raising the level of support for the work of Mohamed El-Baradei and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"We believe there is no greater threat to the peace of God in this world than that posed by weapons of mass destruction," she said.

"The Uniting Church in Australia welcomes the Prime Minister's initiative and looks forward to working with the Government to end the threat of nuclear weapons once and for all."

<http://www.alphasys.com.au/uca2/trunk/images/pdfs/issues/uniting-for-peace/resources/nuclearweaponsfs.pdf>

ATTACHMENT 4

Principles of the Just War

- A just war can only be waged as a last resort. All non-violent options must be exhausted before the use of force can be justified.
- A war is just only if it is waged by a legitimate authority. Even just causes cannot be served by actions taken by individuals or groups who do not constitute an authority sanctioned by whatever the society and outsiders to the society deem legitimate.
- A just war can only be fought to redress a wrong suffered. For example, self-defense against an armed attack is always considered to be a just cause (although the justice of the cause is not sufficient--see point #4). Further, a just war can only be fought with "right" intentions: the only permissible objective of a just war is to redress the injury.
- A war can only be just if it is fought with a reasonable chance of success. Deaths and injury incurred in a hopeless cause are not morally justifiable.
- The ultimate goal of a just war is to re-establish peace. More specifically, the peace established after the war must be preferable to the peace that would have prevailed if the war had not been fought.
- The violence used in the war must be proportional to the injury suffered. States are prohibited from using force not necessary to attain the limited objective of addressing the injury suffered.
- The weapons used in war must discriminate between combatants and non-combatants. Civilians are never permissible targets of war, and every effort must be taken to avoid killing civilians. The deaths of civilians are justified only if they are unavoidable victims of a deliberate attack on a military target.